

Madrid, 20-10-2010

It is our pleasure at the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to join United Nations sister agencies, international and regional organizations, and national statistical offices in celebrating today the first World Statistics Day.

UNWTO has put in place a powerful conceptual framework for gathering basic statistics and indicators relevant to not only the tourism sector but also to the broader economic context in which tourism is embedded. The hallmark achievements in this sense are the *2008 International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics* and the *2008 Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework*, both approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission. Thanks to these Recommendations we have, for the first time, (1) a conceptual framework for setting up a System of Tourism Statistics (see Annex 1) and (2) an international norm for measuring tourism that economists and others can work with, enabling us to address tourism within general macroeconomic analysis and policy.

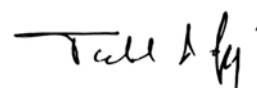
At the same time, this celebration presents an opportunity for renewed joint efforts by National Tourism Administrations (NTAs) and National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to ensure the further implementation of the *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics* and encourage rigorous analysis of tourism as an economic sector. Some initiatives are outlined in Annex 2. For example, the new *Compendium of Tourism Statistics*, to be launched in 2011, responds to the call for greater international comparability of data on tourism activity and its contribution to national economies while at the same time enlarging the focus of tourism to include domestic tourism, tourism industries and employment. In this sense, the data it provides will assist countries in expanding their present level of information for the regular monitoring of the tourism sector's economic performance.

UNWTO supports this process and encourages the formation of alliances between NSOs and NTAs that promote collaboration between their corresponding technicians.

Thank you for your continued commitment to this cause.

Happy World Statistics Day.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Taleb Rifai".

Taleb Rifai
Secretary General

Annex 1. Developing official statistics and complementary data: tourism as a case study

1. A robust conceptual framework for tourism statistics has been developed during 2005-2007 by the international community under the leadership of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The approval by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) of the *2008 International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics* (IRTS 2008) and *2008 Tourism Satellite Account (TSA): Recommend Methodological Framework* (TSA:RMF 2008), is a case study of developing integrated international recommendations for both the development of a system of basic statistics and the unifying framework for most of them in a way that is consistent with National Accounts.
2. The design of a national System of Tourism Statistics (STS) should be viewed as the basic coordination and integration framework of the statistical information produced by all tourism stakeholders. Concepts, definitions, classifications, data, indicators, aggregates and tables of results relating to tourism, designed to provide an exhaustive description of the tourism phenomenon in all its aspects (physical, social, economic, etc.) and a measurement of its economic contribution within a context of international comparability are a structural part of the National Statistical System.
3. The development of a national STS is closely linked to the implementation of the Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA). In fact, the TSA provides the conceptual framework and the organizational structure for the harmonization and reconciliation of most tourism statistics internally within the sector as well as with other economic statistics. From this perspective, it should be seen as an instrument to assist countries in the identification of data gaps and to guide them during the revision of existing data sources as well as in the development of new sources.
4. The new IRTS 2008 and TSA:RMF 2008 constitute the updated reference framework for the STS: both documents are mutually consistent in terms of concepts, definitions and classifications. As a consequence, they should be used as a reference for the design of new statistical sources as well as for the harmonization, coordination and integration of available tourism statistical information, even though these recommendations may extend, in the coming years, beyond the still restricted domain they touch upon.
5. Having once found an international consensus around the concepts, definitions and classifications to be used for the setting up of national STS, UNWTO has started requesting member and non-member countries alike to, in the coming years, make an effort in expanding the present set of basic data and indicators that support international comparability to include a new collection of information resulting from the expanded conceptual framework approved in 2008. This set of basic data and indicators refers to official statistics.
6. The inclusion of a set of ten tourism characteristic industries, the reference to employment in such industries, and the need to improve analysis of tourism's contribution to national economies with a wider range of indicators, etc. all call for a more comprehensive set of data and indicators (see Annex 2, under *New Compendium of Tourism Statistics*).
7. UNWTO is the UN specialized Agency for tourism and its members include National Tourism Administrations as well as a significant number of private and public stakeholders of the tourism sector worldwide (integrated as Affiliate Members). This is clearly an exception in the constituencies of Intergovernmental Organizations and makes the difference of UNWTO vis-à-vis the rest of UN System Agencies. Precisely because of this particular fact, UNWTO is aware that for a great majority of tourism sector key stakeholders, both the amount and timeliness of official statistics needs to be complemented with other types of statistics and indicators.
8. The main reason for this are the volatility of tourism as a social phenomena and the increasing evidence that tourism is playing an increasing role in national economies of all kinds of countries. In order to plan and develop infrastructures and products for attracting new visitors, producers of

those goods and services consumed by visitors are facing increasing competition in a globalized world. Consequently, there is a real demand for more information besides official statistics, especially short-term indicators.

9. Particularly significant is the fact that this demand is more explicit in those countries that have already implemented a TSA. With the explicit recognition that the TSA is a vital part of the tourism information system for any country, the experience of these countries suggests that once a TSA is established to provide a clear picture of the relevance of the tourism sector in the national economy, the real demand for information moves to indicators delivered quickly across a wide range of variables.
10. Consequently, UNWTO understands that it is now time to identify specific steps to address these requests by the key users of tourism information. This implies that the concept of a System of Tourism Statistics pivoting around official statistics exclusively should be related to the more comprehensive concept of a Tourism Information System.
11. The information system created by national STS should be the foundation for a reliable and accurate national Tourism Information System (TIS). In addition to STS data, TIS should also include non-statistical information and complementary indicators (principally short-term, both qualitative and quantitative) focusing on:
 - Enlarging the scope of the economic analysis of tourism to include issues like business cycles, policy evaluation, etc.;
 - Specific needs of key stakeholders of the tourism sector (specially NTA's and industry associations in order to find adequate information to monitor tourism economic performance.); and
 - Different users sharing common concepts and language in order to favour the identification process of the information needs by private and public stakeholders.

This complementary set of information should be designed for national purposes only.

Annex 2. Overview UNWTO statistical publications and related initiatives

Factsheet on the Tourism Satellite Account

[\(LINK\)](#)

A synopsis of one of the major statistical achievements in tourism, the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), the Factsheet is intended as a first introduction for understanding tourism as a key economic sector.

Policy Paper - Positioning Tourism in Economic Policy: Evidence and Some Proposals

[\(LINK\)](#)

Presented at the 2nd T.20 Ministers' Meeting in the Republic of Korea on 11-13 October 2010, this paper provides an overview of available official data and indicators that are relevant not only for the tourism sector but also for the broader economic context in which tourism is embedded. It argues for leading a movement towards more evidence-based policy in tourism, so that tourism may progress in shaping the agendas of national and international economic policy.

New Compendium of Tourism Statistics

[\(LINK\)](#)

The *Compendium of Tourism Statistics* is designed to provide a condensed and quick-reference guide on the major tourism statistical indicators in each country. Much more than an update on previous editions, the *new Compendium of Tourism Statistics* responds to UNWTO member countries' calls for greater international comparability of data on tourism activity and its contribution to national economies while at the same time enlarging the focus of tourism to include also domestic tourism, tourism industries and employment. To be launched in 2011, it includes a set of basic data articulated in six tables of results (inbound tourism, domestic tourism, outbound tourism, tourism industries, employment, and macroeconomic tourism related indicators) that correspond to an information framework known as the System of Tourism Statistics.

TSA data around the World

[\(LINK\)](#)

As most compilers and users of TSA data know, the formal structure of the TSA is determined by a set of predefined tables (10 tables) presenting basic statistical data of economic nature related to the activity of visitors and the industries supplying the goods and services that they acquire. Therefore, UNWTO has requested from countries, represented by their National Tourism Administration and their National Statistical Office, to provide the official TSA results using the referred tables guaranteeing at the same time that the concepts used are along the lines of those recommended internationally. These results, covering the present status of TSA implementation in 48 countries and selected aggregates from 39 countries, are assembled in this publication.

Understanding Tourism as a Key Economic Sector: User Guide

To become available by the first quarter of 2011, the Guide provides a basic overview for learning about tourism, correcting conventional misconceptions, relating facts and figures to current challenges, and discovering additional reading material and data sources. The United Nations-approved 2008 International Recommendations constitute its conceptual core. The Guide is intended for all those who want to better understand and manage tourism as an economic sector: if you can measure it, you can manage it!

A short self-study e-course based on this Guide is expected by January 2011. This will be freely accessible through the UNWTO website.

Understanding Tourism: Basic Glossary

[\(LINK\)](#)

A reference for all those involved in tourism sector analysis and policy, it covers the key terms stemming from the United Nations approved 2008 International Recommendations on tourism statistics and Tourism Satellite Account.